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Excavations at the McDonald Site, 41BX794, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

I. Wayne Cox

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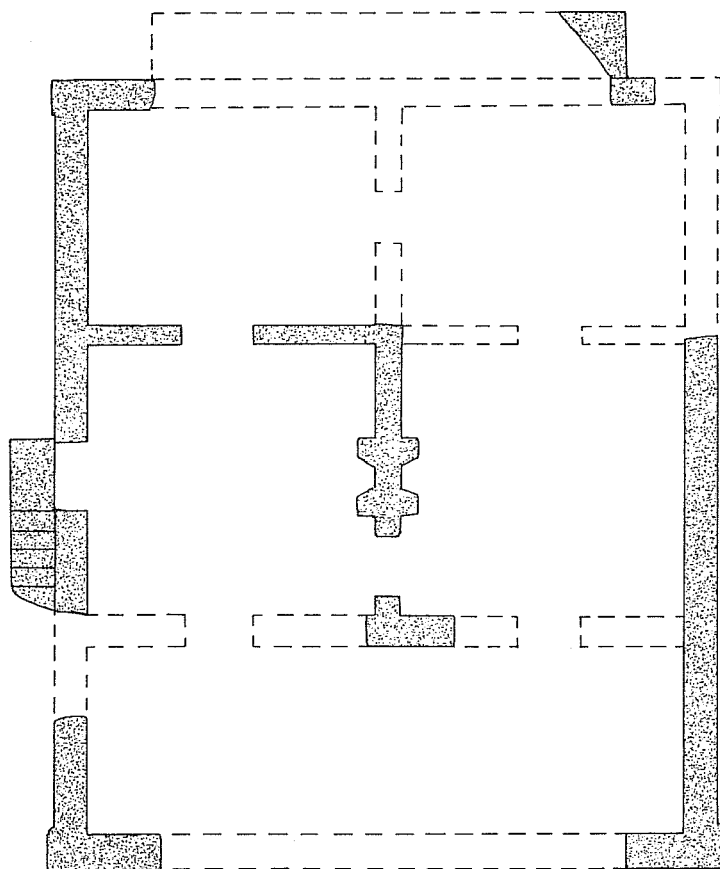
Excavations at the McDonald Site, 41BX794, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

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EXCAVATIONS AT THE
MCDONALD SITE,
41 BX 794,
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR COUNTY,
TEXAS



I. WAYNNE COX

*Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
Archaeological Survey Report, No. 191*

COVER: Plan of the McDonald house. Shaded areas were exposed during excavations; dash lines represent hypothetical reconstruction.

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ABSTRACT

In July 1989, the Center for Archaeological Research entered into a contract with the San Antonio Housing Authority to provide archival research and field investigations for the area to be impacted by additions to the Housing Authority Building and parking on portions of New City Blocks 2553 and 2969. The archival research revealed that the area contained some portions of the San Pedro acequia and the site of the John Stewart McDonald homestead. The acequia had been extensively investigated by the Center in 1979 and 1981, therefore only limited investigations were directed toward the later modified channel, with the primary thrust of field work dedicated toward the McDonald homestead. Excavations revealed that the structure was a substantial residence with the major portion of the basement still intact below the surface.

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Of course, a great deal of the success of the project was a result of the highly qualified crew of field and laboratory personnel who participated in the excavations. Staff members were Anne A. Fox, supervisor; I. Wayne Cox, field director and responsible for research and mapping; Herbert Uecker, assistant field director; Maureen Brown, field recording and laboratory work; Frances Meskill, field recording and final drafting of the illustrations and the cover design; and Clint McKenzie, field and laboratory work. Volunteer staff members include Tommy Tomasal, Marty Morrison, Herb Allison, Hugh Robichaux, Barbara Meisner, Burnley Smith, Shirley Van der Veer, and Darla Cox. Equipment operators, Toxie Wright and Mike Fulgham, were from Wright Backhoe Service.

INTRODUCTION

In September 1989, archaeologists from the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), conducted archival research and field investigations on portions of New City Blocks (NCB) 2553 and 2969 in downtown San Antonio (Fig. 1). The work was performed under a contract with the San Antonio Housing Authority and concerned the area to be impacted by an addition to the existing building at 818 South Flores Street, the existing parking lot, and a vacant area of the property to the south. This area was known to contain the route of the San Pedro acequia and a series of homes, the earliest dating from 1855. Field excavations, preceded by archival research, began September 9, and were concluded September 22, 1989. Texas Antiquities Committee Permit No. 832 was issued for the project. Jack D. Eaton, acting director of the CAR, served as principal investigator, with Anne A. Fox as coprincipal investigator. The author conducted the archival research and served as project director. Field notes, drawings, artifacts, and photographs are curated at the CAR laboratory.

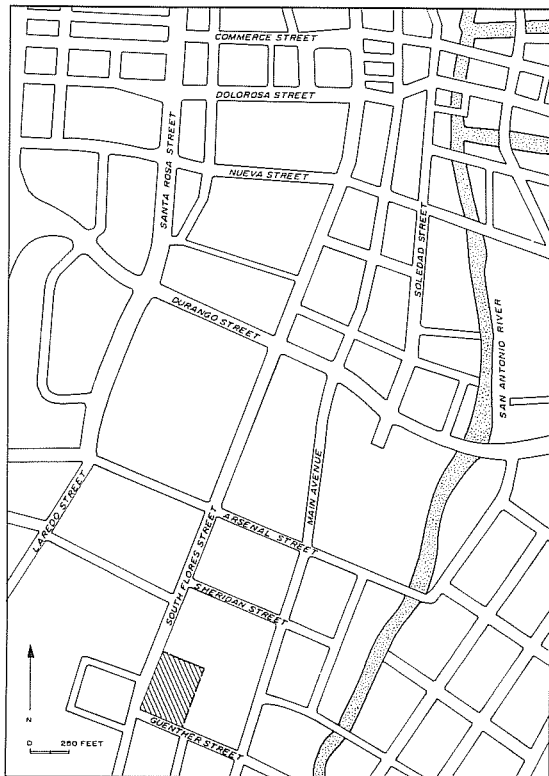


Figure 1. *Location of the Site.* Slash lines indicate the site location.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Prior to construction of the San Antonio Housing Authority building, extensive investigations of the San Pedro acequia were conducted in two phases by the CAR. During June 1979, thirteen trenches were excavated along the path of the irrigation ditch (Valdez and Eaton 1979). This was followed by the excavation of 18 additional trenches in November of the same year (Frkuska 1981). Due to the magnitude of these previous investigations, only limited testing was extended toward the acequia during the current investigations.

EARLY DIVISION OF THE LANDS

In June 1722, the Marquis de Aguayo, Joseph de Azlor y Virto de Vera, governor and captain-general of the provinces of Coahuila and Texas, recommended to the Bourbon King of Spain, Felipe V, the settlement of families along the remote frontier of New Spain (Webb 1952 Vol. I:17, 289; John 1975:152). Among the families chosen to fulfill this action was a group from the Spanish-owned Canary Islands near the coast of Africa. Led by Juan Leal Goraz, the new immigrants traveled overland from Veracruz, arriving at the Presidio of San Antonio de Bexar on March 9, 1731 (Webb 1952 Vol. I:289). Action was immediately taken to establish the villa of San Fernando to the east of the presidio, and town sites were assigned to the new arrivals. Each of the 16 families was granted a plot of land, suitable for irrigation, to the south of the villa between the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek. Each of these plots was decreed to be 105 varas (291.65 feet) wide, but due to the irregularities of the meanderings of the two water courses, they varied in total acreage (Almazán 1731:23). Therefore, each family drew lots to determine their *suerte* or "luck." The twelfth lot (including the area of NCBs 2553 and 2969) was drawn by Juan Delgado (Chabot 1937:146).

Juan Delgado, the eldest son of Luis Delgado, was born in 1711 on Lancerote, the northeastern island of the Canary group. He departed with his family on the *España* March 27, 1730, bound for the new settlement. Upon their arrival at the port of Veracruz, there was an epidemic of *vómito*, or yellow fever in the city. The father, Luis, was stricken and died on the fifth of July (Buck 1980:39, 47). After the death of his father, Juan married Catarina Leal, daughter of the leader of the group, Juan Leal Goraz. After their arrival in San Antonio

de Bexar, his mother married Goraz (Chabot 1937:171).

Upon Juan Delgado's death in 1745, the property was acquired by his youngest son, Juan Amador Delgado. The property was inherited, upon his death in 1799, by his son, José Delgado, and in turn by his children, Nicolás, Casiana, and Amador (Chabot 1937:172-173). The Delgado heirs conveyed the tract to Lecomte de Watine for a purchase price of \$100 on October 3, 1848 (*DR Vol. G1:439*).

Angel Serafin Lecomte de Watine was one of the French nobility who immigrated to the Republic of Texas with the Castro colony in 1851. He gained his title through marriage to Genoveva Florentina de Watine (*DR Vol. J2:535, 536*; Chabot 1937:261). He acquired considerable holdings throughout the state and several plots within the city. Many of his properties were in the subject area and in "Beantown," the area of Judge Roy Bean's home near Mission Concepción. He was described by his contemporaries as "a most modest and unassuming, reticent and retiring man, but withal a very generous and kind one" (Barnes 1910). He sold the Delgado property to Jesus and Cathrina de la Garza and Ignacio Flores on March 15, 1855 (*DR Vol. G2:136*). Some five months later they sold the six-acre tract to J. S. McDonald for \$240 (*DR Vol. O1:462*). The low-selling price would indicate that no improvements had been made on the property.

THE McDONALD HOMESTEAD

John Stewart McDonald, one of 11 children of Reverend James McDonnold and Margaret Grear, was born in 1815 in East Cumberland, Tennessee. In December 1838, the Reverend McDonnold relocated his family to San Augustine, Texas, arriving in February 1839; at this time he changed the spelling of the family name to McDonald (McDonald 1984:1; Pease n.d.). However, John Stewart McDonald had arrived in San Antonio by the summer of 1838 and was awarded a headright grant of 320 acres of land in June 1841 (*Headrights Book No. 1:202*). This was the first of many parcels of land throughout the state that he would acquire over the next decade and a half. For example, in 1850, he acquired over 7900 acres in Bexar County in one transaction from Judge Thomas J. Devine (*DR Vol. I2:27*). This is only one of many property purchases he made from the Rio Grande to the Red River.

On September 6, 1850, he married Clintonia Samuel in San Antonio, with his younger brother, James Grear, as his witness (*Marriage Records B:41*

No. 394). She was 16 years of age, 18 years younger than McDonald. In the census of that year McDonald was listed as Bexar County district surveyor and was residing with his wife, his mother-in-law Lettita Samuel, his brother-in-law William, and his brother James, also a surveyor (*USDI-OC 1850*). In December, he ran for the office of mayor against Albert A. Lockwood, winning by five votes from a total ballot of 267 (*CCM Vol. II:119*).

McDonald's wife, Clintonia, was also acquiring property in her own name from 1850, and in 1852, she purchased "a certain black boy named Willis, aged about twenty-eight, sound in body and a slave for life" (*DR Vol. K2:612*). The practice of a wife purchasing property in her own name, as opposed to a joint purchase with her spouse, was unusual at that time. It probably indicates that she controlled some capital in her own name, and displayed a degree of independence that was not common for the times.

On January 1, 1851, McDonald took office and was the first to serve in the newly constructed courthouse and jail on Military Plaza, later referred to as the "Bat Cave." He succeeded, but did not run against, James M. Devine (*CCM Vol. II:68*). By September 1852, he had joined with J. H. Lyons as publishers and proprietors of the *Western Texan*, established in 1848, the first newspaper in San Antonio. By 1853, he was the sole owner (Everett 1975:112). Also, during that year, he accompanied Samuel A. Maverick on a survey of Fort Mason and Fort Cladbourne (Pease n.d.). Upon his return, he again ran for mayor against John M. Carolan, but was defeated by 57 votes (*CCM Vol. II:243*). In 1855, he was elected city alderman. In August 1855, he purchased a six-acre tract on Flores Street and began construction of his homestead (Fig. 2).

McDonald was a bold and assertive man, wise to the ways of the frontier, business, and politics. He was also brave and positive, and never one to back away from a confrontation. He once engaged John James, one of the town's leading citizens and also a surveyor, in a fist fight in the middle of Commerce Street which ended in a draw (James 1938:27). An associate stated, "I think that McDonald was physically the stoutest man in town, and one of the most fearless" (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:3).

THE POLITICAL SCENE OF THE MID-1850S

During the 1850s a nativist political movement arose in the United States flamed by fears aroused by the great waves of immigrants after 1846; notable among these were the Irish Catholics displaced by

the “potato famine.” An antforeign, anticatholic party, yet strongly unionist, sprang to power in the East. The party, whose organization was secret, was officially named the American Party, but any member when interrogated always answered that he knew nothing about it, hence its popular name, the “Know-Nothing” Party (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1911:877). With the disruption of the power of the Whig Party in 1854, the American Party gained in strength and spread to Texas where its conclaves and lodges acquired considerable influence. In the election of 1855, the party elected 25 state legislators, the mayor of Galveston, and most surprisingly the entire city slate, in predominantly foreign and Catholic San Antonio (Fehrenbach 1968:333). This slate was headed by Mayor James

R. Sweet, and Aldermen C. F. King, J. G. Viall, A. W. Desmuke, B. D. Sappington, and John S. McDonald (*CCM* Vol. II:30). The first resolution of this administration was to repeal the ordinance of January 26, 1852, which required all city ordinances be translated into the French and Spanish languages (*CCM* Vol. II:306). On April 26, the *San Antonio Herald* (1855) printed its support of the *State Gazette's* endorsement of the “Know-Nothing” policies. One of the statements lauded was the proposal:

There is another evil which had long been an injury to our country and that is a refusal to promote the use of the English language. No foreigner can be trusted

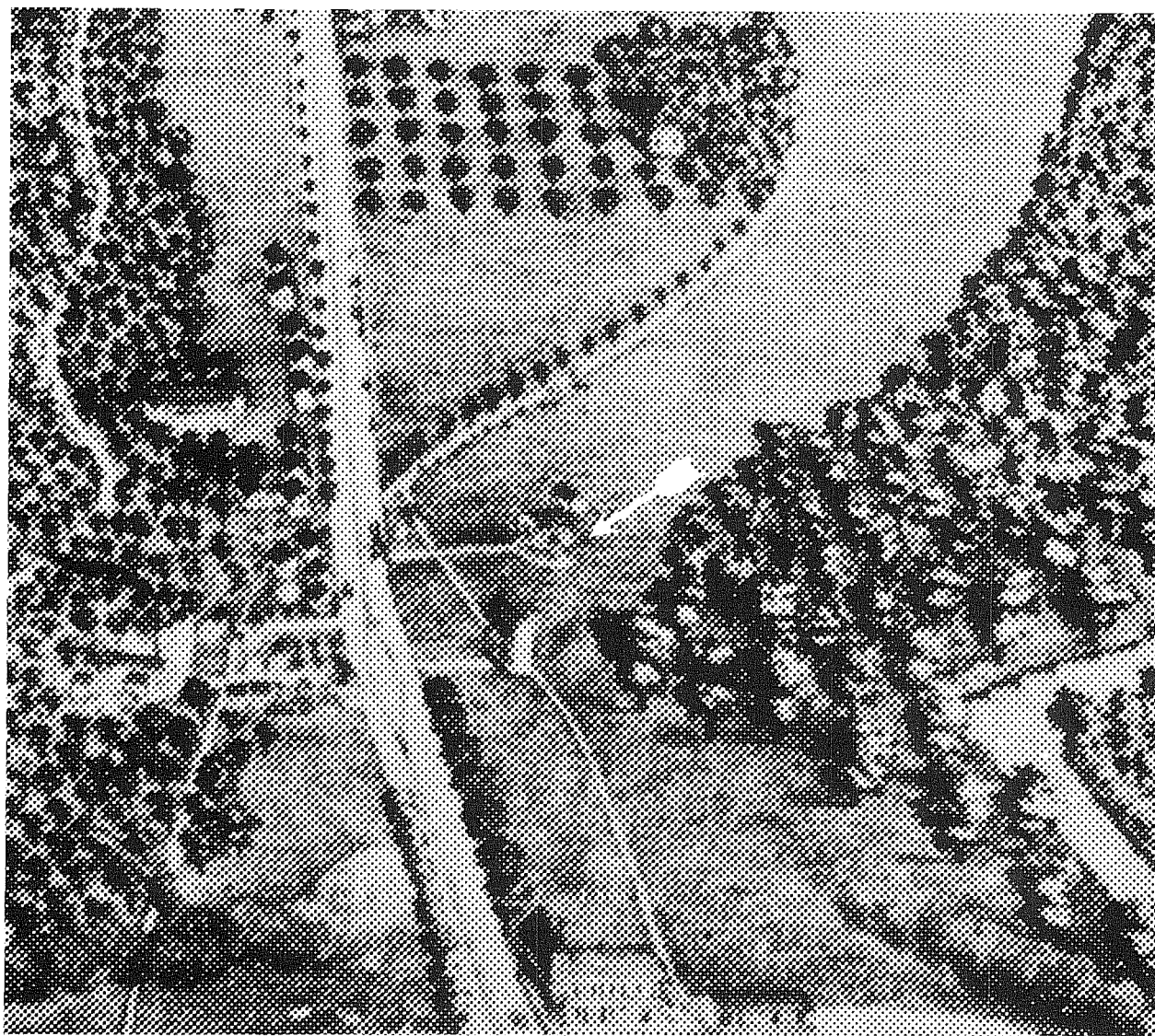


Figure 2. 1886 Bird's Eye View of the Study Area. The arrow indicates the McDonald house location. Koch (1886).

with the elective franchise who is ignorant of the English language. We are opposed to pandering to foreigners in any shape or form. The American character should be above that.

This was the political climate in which former Mayor James M. Devine defeated former Mayor J. M. Carolan in the election of 1855, and assumed office on January 1, 1856 (*CCM* Vol. II:347).

THE "LAMENTABLE OCCURRENCE"

The administration of Dr. Devine was overtly progressing smoothly until July 28, 1856, when the Spanish-language newspaper, *El Ranchero*, published an editorial strongly critical of the "Junta de Know Nothings" (*El Ranchero* 1856:1). The indignant American party leaders held a secret meeting in the offices of Hewitt and Newton, prominent San Antonio lawyers. At four o'clock that afternoon, the mayor was informed, by persons unnamed, that J. S. McDonald and a lawyer named A. H. Davidson, had secured an appointment "to wait on Quintero," the editor of *El Ranchero*. These same persons also informed the mayor that there had been threats "to hang Quintero" (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:1). The *San Antonio Herald*, in an editorial by James P. Newcomb, later accused the mayor of having established a system of espionage for the "purpose of learning the saying and doings of the members of the American party." The paper further stated that McDonald and Davidson and M. G. Cotton had only been appointed as a committee to interview Quintero and report to the party the next day. "It was not determined to do any violence to that individual. The course to be pursued was to be determined by the meeting" (*San Antonio Herald* 1856a).

Mayor Devine later stated that he and his brother, Daniel, "went to tea about sundown," where they were "accosted" by Col. Albury, Warrick Tunstall, and John A. Wilcox, all influential members of the Know-Nothing party. Wilcox had been chosen as the president elect for the American Party at large of Texas for 1856 (Webb 1952 Vol. II:909). A discussion ensued as to the course of action that the mayor would pursue. Mayor Devine stated to Wilcox that he had made a pledge "that if elected mayor, I would know no party and that I believe I have thus far kept my pledge" (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:2). Yet, the mayor apparently felt that stronger action was justified, therefore, on Tuesday, July 29, 1856, he issued a proclamation that required peace-loving

citizens to appear at city hall and join together to protect the rights of all individuals. About 130 persons appeared to answer this call and were sworn as peace officers, about 10 of these were members of the American Party. However, it should be noted that one prominent member, G. T. Howard, was sworn in under threat of a \$100 fine.

A crowd of American Party supporters confronted the mayor in front of his drugstore on Main Plaza, protesting that his proclamation and actions of the day were politically motivated. A strong argument ensued between Devine and Wilcox, and the protesters were ordered from the store and departed at noon. Concerned for Devine's safety, his brother-in-law left a pistol with him, Devine not having one of his own on the premises.

Devine departed his store for lunch and returned about four o'clock, when he observed Wilcox enter the Pyron and Klattes Bar, immediately to the west of his drugstore. Shortly thereafter, Wilcox and McDonald entered his store by way of the southwest entrance, "arm-in-arm" and both "under influence of drink" (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:2). At this point, none of the participants was armed. They argued, and Wilcox ordered Devine to stand up, but he replied that he was under no obligation to do so since he was in his own place of business. This provoked McDonald, and he swore, "Dr. Devine, I will tell you what I think of you — you are a god damned puppy . . . you are a coward" (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:2). Devine ordered the pair from his store. At this point McDonald sprang upon Devine, and they fell to the floor. Devine broke away and obtained the gun that had been left for him earlier. McDonald again engaged him between the store counters, and again, they fell to the floor, McDonald tearing out a clump of Devine's hair. Devine managed to break away again, and as McDonald was rising upon all fours, Devine fired the pistol toward him. McDonald again engaged Devine grasping him by the throat. At this point, they were separated by Peace Officer Dan Murphy and Devine's brother, and Devine was disarmed and placed under arrest. Someone asked McDonald if he were hit, and he replied that he was shot, and lowered himself slowly to the floor.

At this point, Devine, in custody of Murphy, was led toward the city jail, two blocks to the west on Commerce Street. As they approached the northwest corner of Main Plaza, they were overtaken by William Samuel, McDonald's brother-in-law, and they took refuge in a store. Devine was then taken into custody by Sheriff Knox and several other officers, and escorted to the jail.

Devine related, “a mob, headed by Wilcox and West of the Herald, soon gathered, demanding my blood” (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:2). The *San Antonio Texan* (1856a:2) reported the following day “. . . so great has been the excitement during the day, increased by this lamentable occurrence, that it was deemed expedient to have the jail guarded by a force of some seventy men.”

After the departure of Devine, McDonald was taken to Lavanburg’s store nearby where medical help was summoned, but despite their efforts, he died very shortly. The postmortem examination, conducted by Doctors McCormick, Herff, Schloeman, Howard, and Cupples, concluded that the bullet entered the victim’s left side “between the eighth and ninth ribs, severely wounded the left common illiac artery about one inch from the bifurcation of the aorta and passed onward to the right side of the Symphysis Pubis, where the ball was lodged” (Writ of Habeas Corpus 1856:3). Since the wound was located on the left side just forward of the shoulder blade, Devine’s distracters immediately charged that McDonald was shot in the back, which was reported in an article by the *San Antonio Herald* (1856b:1) praising McDonald:

He was high-minded and honorable, a kind and indulgent husband and father, a dutiful son; an affectionate brother and a good citizen. But he is no more, the grave should cover his faults, while only his virtues should be remembered.

Devine was brought to trial before Chief Justice John Hemphill, first chief justice of the Supreme Court of Texas (Webb 1952 Vol. I:795). The town was sharply divided over the guilt or innocence of the mayor. The *San Antonio Texan* (1856a:2) reported:

From the testimony thus far adduced no person of a candid and impartial mind can come to any other conclusion than Dr. Devine killed McDonald in self defense. He was attacked by him in his own store without any previous notice.

An article in the *San Antonio Herald* (1856b:2) countered:

We have yet to see the first bogus democratic sheet compiling a correct and impartial account of the American meeting held in this city and to concede the vile slanders heaped upon them by the Ranchero or the killing of J. S. McDonald.

Is it because the good action of the said American press prefer falsehood to the truth?

The same day this poem was published in the *San Antonio Reporter* (1856):

To the widow of J. S. McDonald
The sable folds that round thee fall,
speak in silent tones to all,
of sorrow’s deep and lonely gloom.
Which ask no solace save the tomb;
which sees no hope for further years,
but sorrow’s ever flowing tears.
One thought at least thy heart can cheer,
and light thy lonely pathway here,
can pierce the shades on Jordan’s strand,
transport you to the holy land,
and wander thither hand in hand
along the streams of life that flow
unstinged by sorrow or by woe
when you together then will sing
the beauties of eternal spring,
and on the wings of angels fly
to every world that lights the sky;
when weary with your flight through space,
make some lone star your resting place.

A Friend

The court found Devine innocent on grounds of self defense, and he returned to the office of mayor on August 12, and was re-elected mayor for the year of 1857 (CCM Vol. III:31).

THE AFTERMATH

John Steward McDonald was not the type of man to anticipate, or prepare, for the inevitable, and therefore, he died intestate, at 41 years of age. He left a wife, a six-year-old daughter, Margaret, and a newborn son, John, Jr. (USDI-OC 1860). His 23-year-old wife and his brother, James Grear, were left to divide the estate. The homestead he had begun in 1855 was his last gift to his family. The final bill for just over 3000 board feet of lumber to complete the home was filed against the estate (*Wills and Probate Records* No. 500 McDonald). Yet, McDonald did not leave his family destitute; the accounting statement filed by the administrators indicates that he left an estate of real and personal property in the amount of \$15,000 (*ibid.*).

James Grear McDonald remained in San Antonio until 1860, he then departed with his

younger brother, Thomas Alexander, to California where they were engaged in the California-Mexico border survey until 1865. James remained in California but his brother returned to Texas (McDonald 1984:2).

Clintonia continued to reside in the homestead and remained a widow until May 12, 1863, when she married Robert J. Sibert (*Marriage Records* Vol. D2:386). On September 5, 1871, her daughter, Margaret (Maggie), married Joseph Sielski (*Marriage Records* Vol. E:387). Clintonia and Robert Sibert continued to reside at the Flores Street home, and listed it as their homestead until July 1874, when they conveyed the property to Isaac P. Simpson for \$10,000 (*DR* Vol. 1:260). They had previously sold the land to the north, approximately the same acreage, for \$3000, indicating that the house had a value of \$7000 (*DR* Vol. V2:339).

Ironically, Isaac P. Simpson, a "very prominent and witty member of the Texas bar," was, from 1871 to 1873, a partner of Thomas J. Devine, the brother of James M. Devine (Barnes 1910:237). Simpson died, in 1896, and left his entire estate "to my beloved wife Fannie" in his unwitnessed holographic will (*Wills and Probate Records* No. 2290). He apparently had used the property for rental purposes, his residence being on Rusk Street (Moody and Morrison 1879). On April 15, 1901, his widow, Frances, with Mary Peacock Bowen Gaenslen, the widow of Dr. John Jacob Gaenslen, filed a petition with the city for a subdivision of the land between West Johnson and Rische Streets (*CCM* Vol. N:767). It was at this time that the present lot lines were established. By 1905, the lots were sold to various individuals, and the McDonald home was razed and new construction begun. By 1907, two Victorian frame houses facing Nathan Street east of the former site of the home were occupied by Virgil W. Wiggins and Titus Eldridge (Appler 1907).

Soon after the redivision of the property into smaller lots the area consisted of wooden frame single unit residences. By 1912, there were 14 homes and two businesses located in the subject area (Fig. 3). In order to conform with the new lot divisions, the acequia had been rerouted along the new lot lines (Appler 1903, 1905, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1912; Texas Publishing Company 1910; *Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.* 1904, 1911). As the area developed, the lots on South Flores Street were converted to, or replaced by, commercial structures. While the area remained primarily residential, by 1930, Flores Street became almost totally commercial (Appler 1917, 1918, 1919, 1921, 1922, 1924; Worley 1926, 1927, 1929). The area was cleared in the 1960s when the property was purchased by the United States Government as an anticipated post office location. After another site was selected for the post office, the government made the property available to the city of San Antonio.

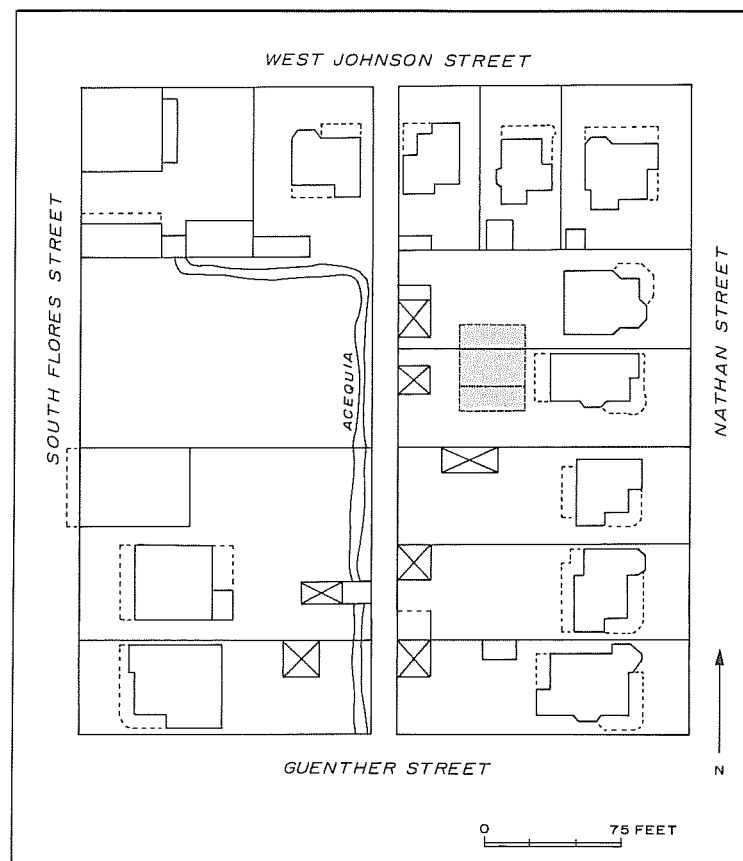


Figure 3. *The Area in 1911.* Adapted from *Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.* (1911).

FIELD WORK

As a result of the archival information obtained prior to field investigations, a research design was formulated to concentrate investigations on a thorough examination of the site of the McDonald homestead. Information obtained indicated that the structure was an adobe dwelling of one story with a basement (*Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.* 1904). The description of the structure as adobe (sun-dried, unfired bricks of clay and various binders) was suspect as previous investigations of buildings constructed during this period have been generally of cut caliche block. Caliche, a hard soil layer cemented by calcium carbonate, occurs in numerous areas within the state and can be easily quarried with hand tools. Both materials are subject to deterioration by moisture and must be protected by a heavy plaster covering; this would prevent the casual observer from detecting the difference between the two construction methods. In either case, they are unsuitable for foundation materials, therefore the basement was anticipated to be of ashlar-dressed limestone, a common and plentiful material for the construction period.

The information obtained, from the 1904 Sanborn insurance map of the area, indicated that the excavations should reveal a structure 35 feet in width with a depth of 32 feet facing toward the south (Guenther Street) with a 13-foot frame porch over the front entrance (Fig. 4). Since the porch was indicated to be of frame construction, no substantial foundations for it were expected. Based upon this information, the location of the house was established by measurements from the present street, and stakes were set in the ground over the site. This method of establishing the location is subject to error caused by later alteration of lot lines and street widening, however, the location of carved limestone corner blocks seemed to indicate the probability that the street corners were reliable measurement points.

Excavations were begun with a backhoe equipped with a

24-inch bucket, beginning at the anticipated northeast corner of the structure and progressing to the south along the projected location of the eastern wall for a distance of 35 feet. When no foundations were located by this effort, the trench was widened toward the east revealing a fired, red brick footing pier and two upright wooden posts. The bricks, manufactured by the D'Hanis Brick Company, were a common building material during the early 1900s, indicating they were associated with the later structure that faced toward Nathan Street, ca. 1906.

The machine was then moved to the location indicated for the southwestern corner, and a new excavation was opened where a deep layer of rusted metal, glassy slag, and other late artifacts were encountered. This trench was terminated in the area of the porch, assuming that the trash pit would have destroyed the supposed shallow trace of the frame footing. An east-west trench was then opened, disclosing a modern poured concrete sidewalk. Underlying the sidewalk was more of the trash pit previously encountered, with no indication of the basement structure.

Another excavation was opened to the west of the first trench in an attempt to bisect the line of the north wall near the middle of the structure.

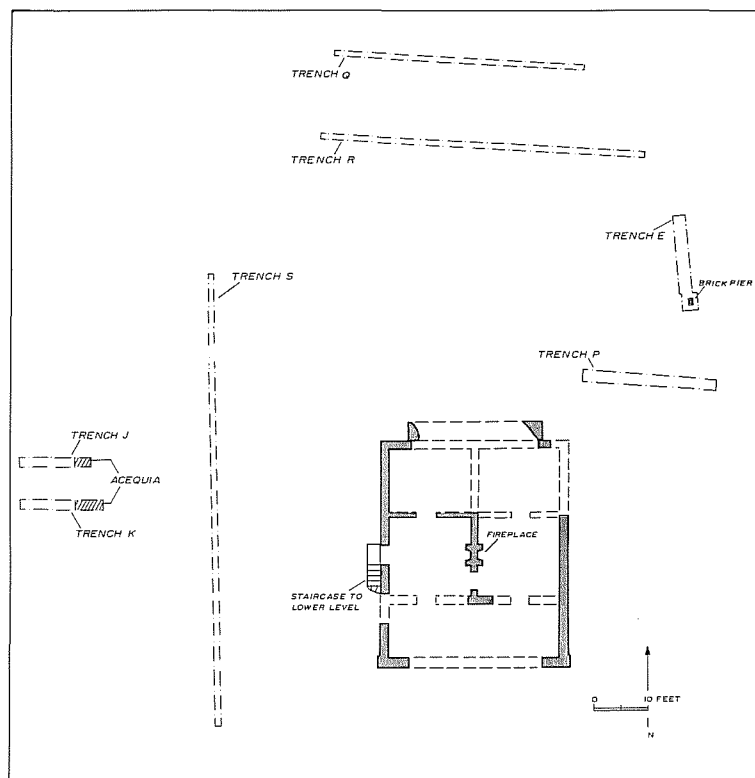


Figure 4. Site Layout with Trench Locations.

Approximately eight feet south of the estimated location of the wall, dressed limestone blocks were encountered, which appeared to be the correct thickness to be the north wall. The trench was extended an additional 35 feet to the south without encountering any evidence of the south wall. The equipment was then removed, and hand excavations and cleaning were begun on the limestone blocks, revealing an interior plaster covering and additional structural blocks extending to the north from the wall.

While hand excavations were being conducted on the north wall, the backhoe was used to open a shallow trench to the northeast (Trench E) where archival information indicated a small support building had been located (Fig. 2). Just below the surface, a brick pier, identical to that located in the first trench was encountered. A 1-m² excavation unit yielded a number of artifacts, but no evidence of the support building for the McDonald house was located. The pier is apparently related to the nearby Nathan Street house.

After cleaning revealed that the north wall had been located, an east-west excavation was conducted along the line of the wall to establish the northeastern corner. It was found to be badly disturbed but partially intact. Excavations were then opened along the line of the east wall. It soon became evident that the limestone basement did not terminate at the front of the house, but extended completely under the porch structure, making the dimensions of the basement 45 x 35 feet. This produced an enclosed area of 1575 square feet, considerably larger than had been expected.

From this point on, excavations on the house were directed toward tracing the extent of the structure and defining its features. The home was found to have an exterior entrance into the basement consisting of a stone-lined enclosure with a threshold and four descending steps to a paved stone landing (Fig. 5,a). Upon opening the doorway into the interior of the basement, it was found to have a compacted caliche floor just below the level of the landing, giving a depth of approximately 42 inches. Since this was the original depth of the basement it could now be established that the structure was designed as a one-story home constructed over a full basement, one half of which was above the ground surface, or a "half basement."

Final excavations revealed that the area was divided into two rooms on the north, two rooms on the south, and two central rooms served by a double fireplace located in the center of the structure (Fig. 5,b). A pattern of cut nails across the surface of the caliche indicated that it originally had a wooden floor. The construction of the basement

indicated that it had been designed with windows, at least under the porch area, beginning at the original ground level to provide light and ventilation into the interior.

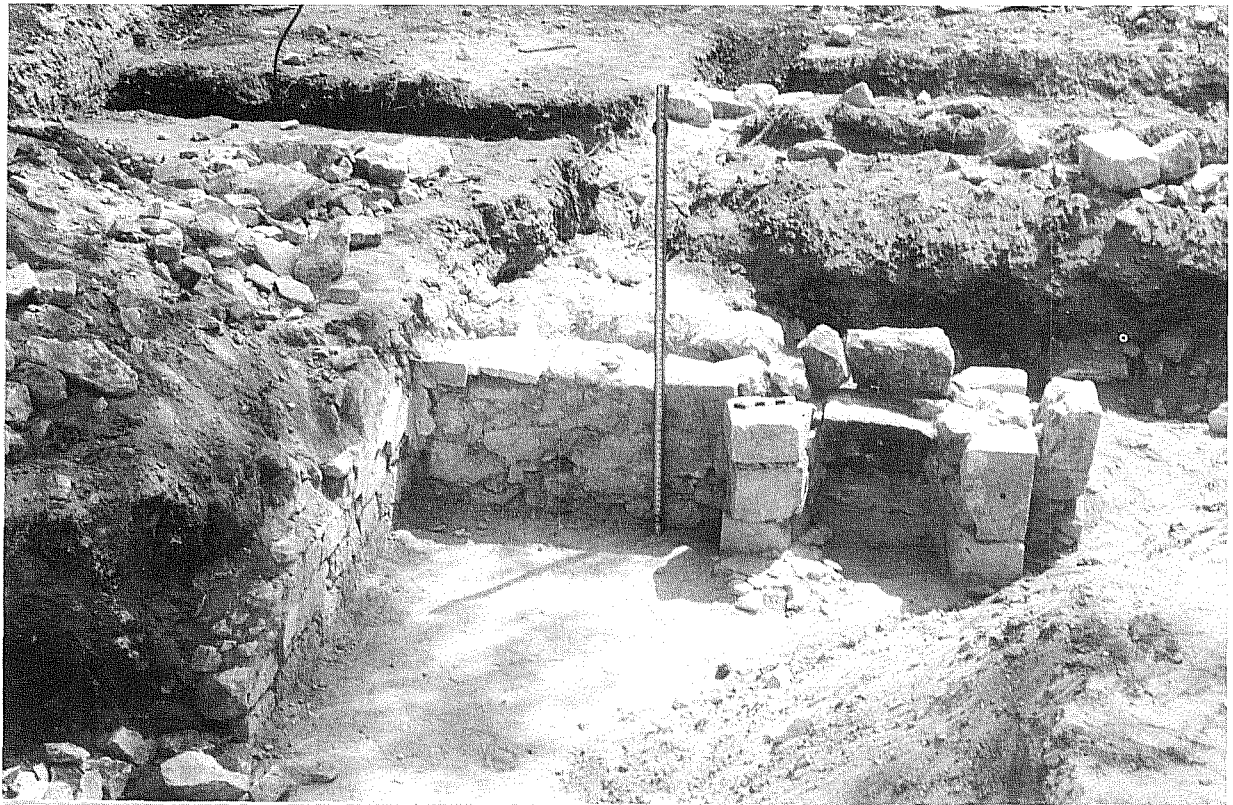
At various times during the period of the field work additional trenches were opened in an attempt to locate other cultural features on the site. Two trenches (J and K; Fig. 6, a, b) were opened to the west of the structure, revealing the relocated route of the acequia after the new division of the lots. Trenches (P, Q, R, and S) were opened across the northern portion and along the center line of the block in an attempt to locate support structures for the McDonald house and the later residences. No traces of any structures were found, possibly because surface disturbances had obliterated their shallow footings. It had been hoped that the privy pit for the McDonald house might be located, but the extent of the original lot, six acres, made it extremely difficult to predict its location.

ARTIFACT DISCUSSION

The artifacts recovered could not be considered a representative sample, since they were collected incidentally to the search for foundations and other construction details and not in any systematic manner. However, they do give a few clues to the general socioeconomic level of the household, to the construction of the building, and to the activities being carried out in the general area of the house. Certain of the artifacts are illustrated (Fig. 7) as being typical of the collection or of particular interest or importance for dating.

MCDONALD HOUSE

In the kitchen/dining category, the ceramics and glass hold some information on the operation of the household (Table 1). Two ceramic sherds (Fig. 7,h) are from a Mexican-made, brown-rimmed lead-glazed utility bowl of a type common in San Antonio kitchens in the 18th and 19th centuries and still available today. The decorative patterns on the whiteware sherds are all late 19th- and early 20th-centuries patterns. One brown transfer sherd (Fig. 7,g) is from a bone dish, an auxiliary dish included in most sets of china in the 1890s (see Montgomery Ward & Co. 1895:526-536). A whiteware sherd (Fig. 7,i) decorated with a cut sponge design is of a type popular in San Antonio in the late 19th century. A whiteware sherd (Fig. 7,j) with blue willow transfer design was a motif popular in the 19th century (Godden 1975:230).

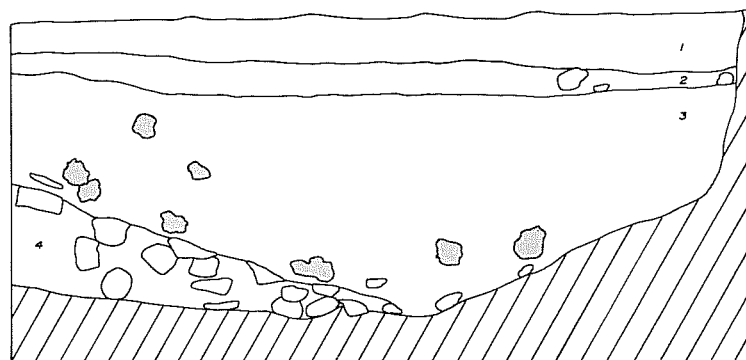


a



b

Figure 5. *Views of the Excavations.* a, basement with chimney; b, stairway to basement.

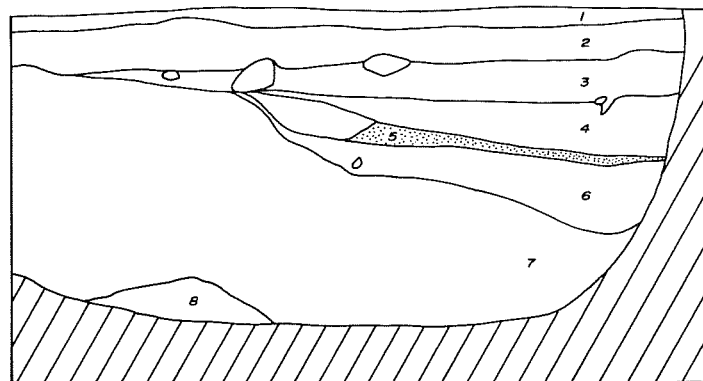


- 1 VERY DARK GRAYISH BROWN (10YR 3/2)
- 2 WHITE CALICHE AND ANGULAR COBBLE FRAGMENTS (10YR 8/1)
- 3 BURNED DEPOSIT CONTAINING ASH AND SLAG, VERY DARK GRAY (10YR 3/1)
- 4 LIMESTONE CALICHE WALL DEBRIS, LIGHT GRAY (10YR 7/2)

○ LIMESTONE
 ▨ SLAG DEPOSITS

0 2 FEET

a



- 1 HUMIC, PALE BROWN (10YR 6/3)
- 2 YELLOW BROWN, LOOSE, GRAVELLY (10YR 7/4)
- 3 RUBBLE FILLED, LOOSE, GRAY BROWN (10YR 5/2)
- 4 GRAY, COMPACTED (10YR 7/2)
- 5 CHARCOAL (10YR 2/1)
- 6 LOOSE, GRAY BROWN WITH CHARCOAL (10YR 3/2)
- 7 GRAY BROWN, STERILE (10YR 5/2)
- 8 LIGHT GRAY CALICHE (10YR 7/1)

b

Figure 6. Profiles of Trenches. a, Trench J, north wall; b, Trench K, north wall.

TABLE 1. ARTIFACTS FROM
MCDONALD HOUSE

ARTIFACT TYPE	NUMBER OF SPECIMENS
Activity Item	
Clay marble	1
Barn/Workshop Items	
Battery carbon	1
Battery clamp	1
Brake or clutch pedal	1
Coal fragments	3
Crucible fragments	4
Gate hinge	1
Leaf spring fragment	1
Motor mount	1
Nuts	2
Pistons	2
Screw hook	1
Slag fragments	41
Spark plugs	2
Splenoid switch	1
Washers	3
Wire fragments	2
Clothing	
Bone buttons	2
Decorative buckle	1
Glass button	1
Leather fragment	1
Overall button	1
Plain buckle	1
Plain metal button	1
Saber belt adjustment hook	1
Shell button	1
Construction Items	
Brick/tile fragments	12
Ceramic insulator fragments	8
Ceramic pipe fragments	2
Cut nails	109
Hardware fragments	5
Mortar sample	1
Plaster fragments	16
Window glass	644
Wire nails	45
Household Items	
Ceramic brazier fragment	1
Clothes pin spring	1
Flower pot, glazed	5
Flower pot, unglazed	1
Light bulb glass	10
Kitchen/Dining Items	
Bone fragments	75
Ceramics	
Decorated whitewares	6
Cut sponge	1
Decal	1
Transfer	4
Lead glazed	2
Plain colored glaze	13
Porcelain	14
Gold rim	2
Molded design	3
Plain	9
Stoneware	1
Undecorated whitewares	21
Yellowware	1
Glass Containers	
Aqua	107
Black	8
Blue	1
Brown	35
Clear	91
Green	235
Pressed	2
White	2
Iron scrap	10
Tin can	12

The plain green blue glaze on a group of whiteware sherds from one vessel represents a forerunner of the "Fiesta Ware" produced by the Homer Laughlin Company in the 1930s (Ketchum 1983:202).

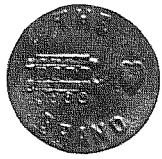
There is little remarkable about the glass fragments recovered from the McDonald house, except the unusually large total of olive green wine bottle glass which was concentrated in a relatively restricted area east of the foundation, perhaps under a window out of which the bottles were dropped or thrown. At least four bottles are represented by various-shaped bases, and anyone who has attempted to reconstruct a broken wine bottle knows how many sherds one bottle can produce. This deposit is interesting in relation to the testimony of witnesses on the day of the shooting in the drugstore that Mr. McDonald apparently was definitely not a teetotaler. An interesting bottle also recovered from the house vicinity is a blue green medicine bottle (Fig. 7,l) labelled "L. ORYNSKI/DRUGGIST/SAN ANTONIO/TEX." The Orynski drugstore was in operation from 1880 to 1891, according to Morrison (1891:84-85) and Land and Thompson (1885:97-98). An aqua soda water bottle base (Fig. 7,m) is marked "C & I," which is the trademark of Cunningham & Ihmsen, in operation at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 1865 to 1879 (Toulouse 1971:132). A brown case (square) bottle labelled "UNDOLPHO WOLFE'S //AROMATIC/SCHNAPPS//SCHIEDAM" was reconstructed. This product was introduced ca. 1848 and continued in popularity through the Civil War (Switzer 1974:364, Fig. 49; Fike 1987:187).

Household artifacts reflect a few details of life in the McDonald house. A large, thick unglazed ceramic fragment represents a ceramic charcoal brazier. These were used in San Antonio and south Texas houses at the turn of the century for a number of purposes, including warming food and heating sadirons. A fragment or more of one of these objects turns up on nearly every San Antonio house site of the period. Flower pot fragments, both glazed and unglazed, were found in the area around the front porch, suggesting that Mrs. McDonald was a gardener. A clothespin spring found in the investigations dates to sometime after the introduction of such clothespins ca. 1895 (Israel 1968:139).

In the clothing category, buttons and buckles were the most common items found. Of the buttons, the most interesting and representative of the era are the bone buttons (Fig. 7,b) and a stamped, compound metal button (Fig. 7,a) marked with a trolley and a heart, with "The" above and "Brand" below. The Carhart company made overalls and other work clothing in the late 19th

Figure 7. *Selected Artifacts.*

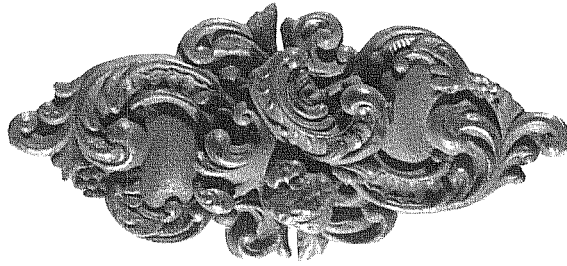
- a, stamped metal button, Carhart, McDonald house;
- b, bone button, McDonald house;
- c, stamped metal belt buckle, McDonald house;
- d, U.S. Cavalry saber belt adjustment hook, McDonald house;
- e, bisque doll, Unit 1;
- f, hair pin, McDonald house;
- g, brown transfer bone dish, McDonald house;
- h, lead-glazed bowl, McDonald house;
- i, cut sponge decorated earthenware, McDonald house;
- j, blue willow transfer, McDonald house;
- k, painted design on porcelain, Trench S;
- l, medicine bottle, Orynski drugstore, McDonald house;
- m, aqua bottle base marked "C & I," McDonald house.



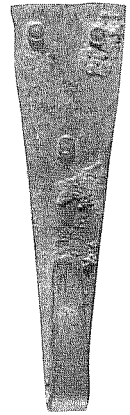
a



b



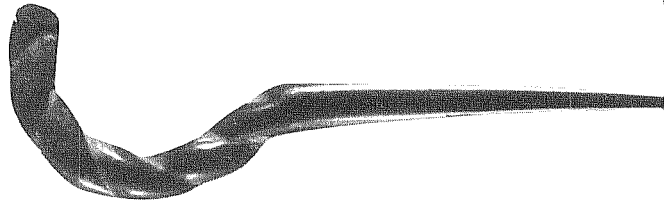
c



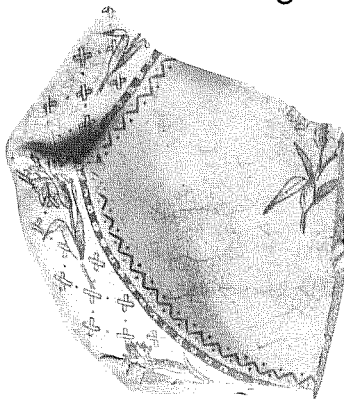
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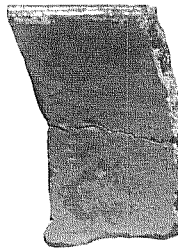
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h



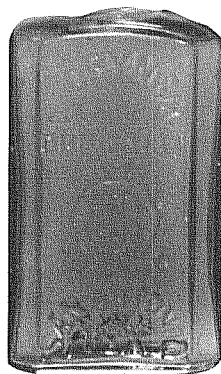
i



j



k



l



m

century. The ornate stamped metal buckle (Fig. 7,c) would have been from a woman's belt for a dressy outfit. An object that could be considered part of a man's clothing is a belt attachment hook (Fig. 7,d) for a pre-1874 U.S. Cavalry officer's saber (Herskovitz 1978:35, Fig. 11,f), reflecting the former military career of one of the residents in the house. The personal items recovered present a few clues to the appearance of the residents of the house. An ornamental "rubber" hairpin (Fig. 7,f; Israel 1968:322) would have been used to pin a woman's long hair up on top of her head or perhaps in a bun at the back. The eyeglass lens is from a typical early pair, with small, oval lenses and wire frames, perhaps used by one of the older residents of the house.

The only representative in the McDonald house collection of the activities of the household is a clay marble, perhaps lost by John, Jr., or a child of one of the families who rented the house during the late 19th century, when such marbles were popular (Jurney and Moir 1987:155).

Under the barn/workshop category, most of the artifacts represent the intrusive, later automobile repair debris found in the center of the house foundation. Apparently some metal casting was being done at the garage, since there was a great deal of slag and coal in the deposit, as well as several pieces of a graphite crucible which would have been used in the process.

Construction materials found were directly related to the house and included hundreds of sherds of window glass panes that must have been shattered when the house was demolished, and nails and plaster deposited in the cellar hole when the house was pushed into it. Thirty three-inch cut nails found on the cellar floor testify to the fact that there was probably a wood floor laid over the caliche on a framework of joists which were held together by nails. The number of ceramic insulator fragments found probably indicates that the house was wired for electricity sometime before it was demolished ca. 1906.

TRENCH E, UNIT 1

While the brick pier found in Unit 1 probably is related to the post-1900 house in the vicinity, most of the artifacts recovered from the unit and trench (Table 2) could have been deposited as surface scatter by residents of either that house or the McDonald house. There are a few objects that clearly are too early, however, to be associated with the later occupation. Among these are the bone

toothbrush handle and the bisque doll (Fig.7,e) which date to the late 19th century.

**TABLE 2. ARTIFACTS FROM
TRENCH E, UNIT 1**

ARTIFACT TYPE	NUMBER OF SPECIMENS
Activity Items	
Metal toy gun part	1
Porcelain doll	1
Clothing	
White glass button	1
Construction Items	
Brick/tile fragments	13
Cut nails	9
Electrical clamp	1
Electrical insulator fragments	4
Hardware fragments	2
Window glass	17
Wire nails	30
Kitchen/Dining Items	
Bone fragments	33
Ceramics	
Porcelain	1
Stoneware	2
Undecorated whiteware	3
Glass Containers	
Aqua	7
Blue	2
Brown	5
Clear	18
Tin can scrap	7
Personal Items	
Bone toothbrush handle	1

TRENCH S

Trench S was purposefully located across the back of the lot for the 1909 house facing onto Nathan Street, hoping to find evidence of privies or outbuildings, which are generally located along lot lines. No structural evidence or trash pits were found. However, many of the artifacts recovered during trenching (Table 3) appear to date to the post-1906 period and could relate to occupations facing on Nathan Street and/or South Flores Street. The ceramics are predominantly undecorated whitewares, of which one bears a mark of the Maddock pottery in Burslem, England, used ca. 1906 and after (Godden 1964:406). A sherd of rather inferior porcelain with a blue painted design (Fig. 7,k) is probably of 20th-century manufacture.

The proportions of clear to colored glass generally rise rapidly as the mid-1930s approach (Kendrick 1967:24). The glass from the McDonald household was found to be 19% clear, whereas

Trench S glass is 45% clear. Even allowing for the unusually high percentage of green wine bottle glass, the percentages are apparently changing.

Here, as at the McDonald house, an intrusion of discarded car parts indicates the proximity of the used car parts store on the lot to the west.

TABLE 3. ARTIFACTS FROM TRENCH S

ARTIFACT TYPE	NUMBER OF SPECIMENS
Activity Item	
Slate pencil	1
Barn/Workshop Items	
Automobile ornament fragment	1
Bolt	1
Car parts, unidentified	3
Chain drive link pin	1
Horseshoe	1
Nuts	2
Rubber fragments	2
Spark plug	1
Washers	2
Wire fragments	3
Clothing	
Belt buckle	1
Construction Items	
Asphalt floor tile fragment	1
Brick/tile fragments	3
Ceramic pipe fragment	1
Cut nails	5
Door latch	1
Mortar chunk	1
Paint can lids	3
Porcelain plumbing fixture fragment	1
Window glass	18
Wire nails	15
Household Item	
Light bulb base	1
Kitchen/Dining Items	
Bone fragments	32
Ceramics	
Lead glaze	1
Painted porcelain	1
Painted whiteware	1
Stoneware	2
Undecorated whiteware	27
Glass containers	
Aqua	19
Brown	19
Clear	43
Green	12
White	2
Iron scrap	3
Metal caps	3
Tin can scrap	8

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this project, the only information available about the McDonald house was that which had been established concerning the San Pedro acequia and its history. The archival search prior to the field work clearly established

that the McDonald homestead was of considerable historic significance and provided excellent primary information to establish a research design to direct the field excavations. However, once actual excavation began the limitations of the archival materials became evident. As a result of the data gathered from the structure still intact within the ground, our information about the site was greatly expanded.

The final computation of the actual size of the home provides a more complete picture of the true significance of the mayor's homestead. Once it was established that the basement was not merely designed as a storage area, but an integral part of the residence, the socioeconomic status of the occupants became much clearer. The total living space in the home exceeded 2600 square feet, a stately home for the period. At that time many of the homes of the middle to upper class residents did not exceed 1200 square feet.

It was clearly established that the lower portion of the structure remains virtually intact beneath the surface of the lot. During the excavations, no evidence was obtained indicating that the structure had burned, and since it was still occupied until so near the date of its destruction, was probably almost intact at the time it was razed for the later construction on the lot. The trash encountered on the exterior of the structure must have been deposited at approximately this time. The lack of evidence of adobe residue anywhere on the site, and the heavy plastering of all surfaces seems to support the conjecture that the upper story was constructed of cut caliche block.

The size of the structure, the quality of the workmanship of the stone, and the spaciousness of the homestead indicate that this home was one of the most impressive of the period. It is certainly in agreement with the historic picture painted of a prosperous and powerful leader of the city.

The deep intrusive deposit in the center of the foundation containing rusted metal car parts, slag, and fragments of a crucible for metal casting was either a mid-20th century attempt at filling in the depression caused by the rotting of wooden members and settling of the debris from the house, or an intentional burying of local trash while cleaning the area. The source of the material would have been close at hand, for by 1951 this section of South Flores Street was occupied by filling stations and used car parts stores (*Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd.* 1951).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The historical significance of John Stewart McDonald and the relatively intact condition of a major portion of his homestead suggests that the site should be seriously considered for recognition as a State Archeological Landmark. Suitable marking of the site should be given consideration in future development of the area. At this time no further work is recommended because present planning will not impact the actual site of the structure. Should further work be anticipated, an expanded search for support structures should be considered.

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APPENDIX

INTRODUCTION

On March 1, 1990, formal notice was given the CAR by letter (Bomersbach 1990) that construction had begun on the San Antonio Housing Authority addition at 818 South Flores Street. The CAR was to provide on-call observation during the project, as stated in the original proposal submitted to SAHA in 1989 (Eaton 1989).

On Monday, March 5, Anne Fox and Wayne Cox of the CAR staff visited the site at the request of the contractor. The stone walls lining the acequia were visible parallel to the south wall of the SAHA building in an area that had been partially excavated. There was no one working at the site, due to recent rains that had turned the area into a mud hole. Numerous subsequent attempts to reach the City Historic Preservation Office were unsuccessful. After hearing nothing further from the contractor, on March 15, Fox and Cox returned

to the site to find that the stone lining of the acequia had been removed throughout the area where the building addition was to be built. Since this was contrary to the original plan to bridge over the acequia (Bomersbach 1989), the City Historic Preservation Officer was notified, and work on the site was stopped.

Subsequently, the contractor removed the overburden over the balance of the acequia to the southern boundary of the project area, under the supervision of the archaeologists, revealing the stone lining and various modifications that had been made to the feature. The following observations were made at that time.

The stone lining of the southern portion of the acequia south of Johnson Street (ca. 90 feet) is relatively intact (Fig. 8), but the stones are extremely friable. At about 27 feet from the southern boundary of the area, which was marked at the time by a chainlink fence, the acequia has been cut by the brick foundation of a later building. The fill in and around the acequia in this area contains numerous fragments of red and yellow

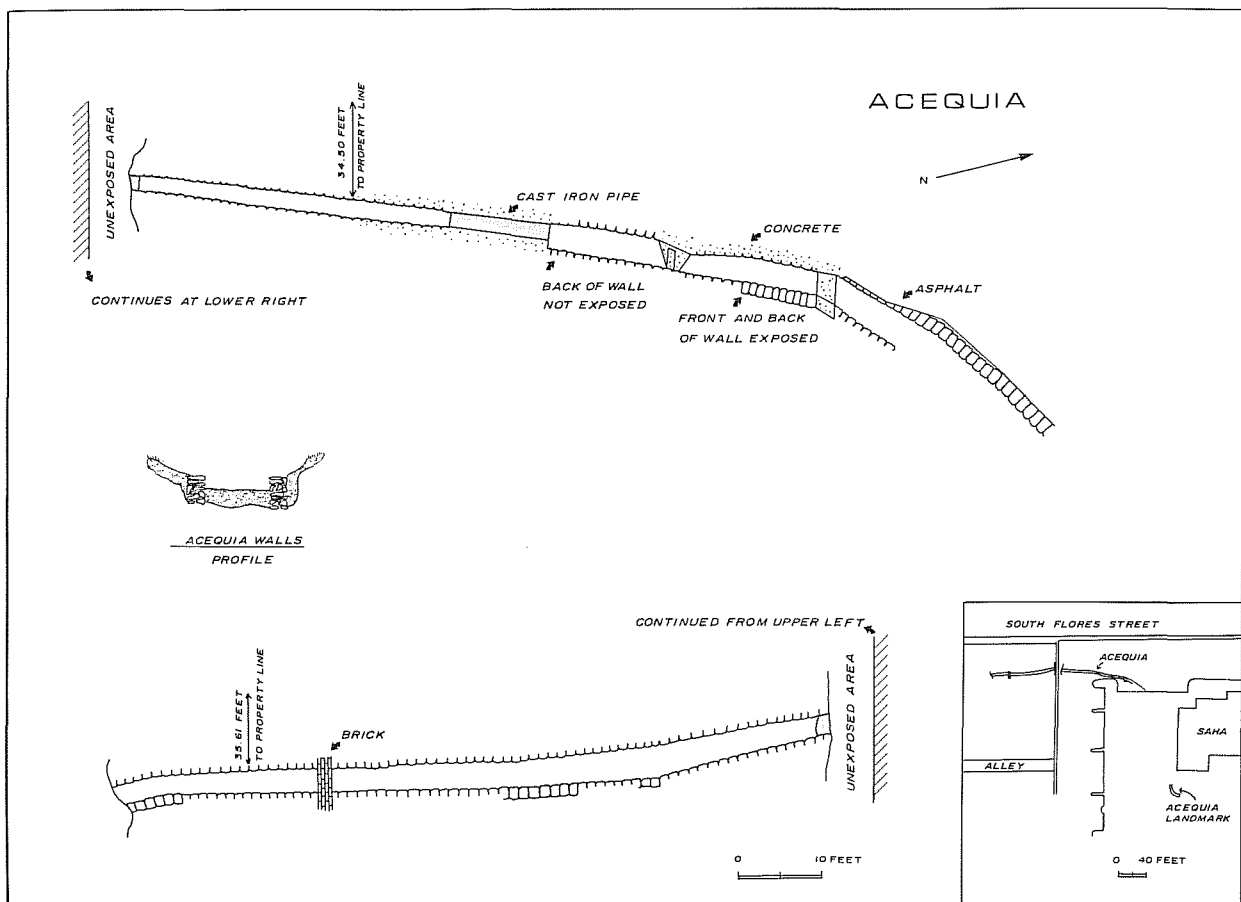


Figure 8. Location and Condition of the Acequia.

brick. The stone lining abruptly stops about five feet north of the fence line.

About 90 feet north of the fence, an area of poured concrete covers the acequia for 10 feet. A large fired clay pipe leads up to the concrete on the south side. Emerging from the north side of the concrete is a 22-inch iron pipe surrounded by 10 inches of concrete. This pipe was apparently installed to carry the water of the acequia beneath Johnson Street when it was built. There is no trace of the original stone lining throughout this section. The stones resume on the north side of Johnson Street and continue to the north as shown on Figure 8. Here again, the stones are fragile and crumble easily. In two places, the acequia is cut by later limestone foundations, and here the west stone lining wall of the ditch has been preserved ca. 20 feet farther north than the east side as the result of the construction excavations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the fragile condition of the stone, we recommend that the acequia be carefully reburied and that any interpretive plan developed for this feature be confined to replicating the acequia at the surface directly over the original. The section that has been replaced by concrete and iron piping is of no particular historic importance and need not be considered in the interpretive plans. We also recommend that any section of the original stone-lined ditch that is to be crossed by driveways or parking for vehicular traffic should be protected by a reinforced concrete slab.

REFERENCES CITED

Bomersbach, D.

1989 Letter to Jack Eaton, CAR-UTSA, May 23.

1990 Letter to Anne A. Fox, CAR-UTSA, March 1.

Eaton, J.

1989 Letter to Alfredo Ramirez III, SAHA, June 23.

